DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 474 783 PS 031 173

AUTHOR Allen, Ben; Greene, Sarah; McGrady, Michael; Boel, Bridget; Ryan, Joel; Whitehead, Diane; Smith, Angela; Kane, Elizabeth; Qualls, Brocklin; Wahid, Kahree

TITLE National Head Start Association Position Paper: Why Conservatives Should Support Head Start.

INSTITUTION National Head Start Association, Alexandria, VA.

PUB DATE 2003-00-00

NOTE 9p.; For related paper, see PS 031 174.

AVAILABLE FROM National Head Start Association, 1651 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. Tel: 703-739-0875; Fax: 703-739-0878; Web site: http://www.nhsa.org. For full text: http://www.nhsa.org/research/ pdf-doc/positionpaper1.pdf.

PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120)

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS

DESCRIPTORS Budgets; *Conservatism; *Federal Programs; *Organizations (Groups); Position Papers; *Preschool Education; Professional Associations

IDENTIFIERS National Head Start Association; *Program Characteristics; *Project Head Start

ABSTRACT

Head Start is a comprehensive federal preschool program, serving children prenatal through age 5 and their families with the overall goal of increasing the school readiness of young children in low-income families. Noting that the program has typically garnered strong support from political liberals and moderates, this position paper of the National Head Start Association asserts that the program has several features that should appeal to political conservatives. The paper argues that Head Start programs operate locally, promote the family, emphasize literacy, yield a significant return-on-investment for American taxpayers and society, reduce criminal behavior, and encourage volunteerism. Finally, the position paper claims that these features are seriously jeopardized under the Bush Administration's budget proposal. (Contains 22 endnotes.) (KB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original document.

ED 474 783

National Head Start Association

Position Paper: Why Conservatives Should Support Head Start

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Marlene Karwowski

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Copyright © 2003 by the National Head Start Association,
Research and Evaluation Department, Ben Allen, Ph.D.
1651 Prince Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314
Telephone: (703) 739-0875 Fax: (703) 739-0878

PS 031783

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgements are due to the individuals who helped on this paper. Within the National Head Start Association (NHSA), thanks are due to Sarah Greene, Michael McGrady, Bridget Boel, Joel Ryan, Diane Whitehead, Angela Smith, Elizabeth Kane, Brocklin Qualls, and Kahree Wahid. In addition, NHSA thanks Dr. Edward Zigler at Yale University and Dr. W. Steven Barnett at the National Institute for Early Education Research for making comments on an earlier version of this paper.

Position Paper: Why Conservatives Should Support Head Start

Introduction

Head Start is a comprehensive federal preschool program, serving children prenatal through age 5 and their families with the overall goal of increasing the school readiness of young children in low-income families. Although this program has typically garnered strong support from liberals and moderates, it has several features that should appeal to conservatives. They are that Head Start programs operate locally, promote the family, emphasize literacy, yield a significant return-on-investment for American taxpayers and society, reduce criminal behavior, and encourage volunteerism. Ironically, these features are *seriously jeopardized* under the Bush Administration's budget proposal.

Operate Locally

The idea of local control of program operations has been a hallmark of the Head Start program for more than 35 years. The role of government has always been to establish national performance standards while the role of the local programs has always been to design methods and strategies to meet those standards. The Head Start Act states unequivocally that Head Start agencies, not the federal government, are responsible for "establish[ing] or adopt[ing] rules" to carry out "program activities" "effectively, efficiently and free of ... favoritism." See Section 644(a) of the Head Start Act. Section 640(f) of the Act also makes this point by requiring ACF to:

> . . .establish procedures to enable Head Start agencies to develop locally designed or specialized service delivery models to address local community needs.

Congress made clear through these provisions that the responsibility for designing effective programs rests with local agencies who are in the best position to be responsive to local needs.

Moreover, the Program Performance Standards, even more explicitly than the Head Start Act, make clear that it is the local program that decides which curriculum to use. Specifically, the Standards state that grantees must select and implement a curriculum that "[p]rovides for the development of cognitive skills by encouraging each child to . . . develop age appropriate literacy. . ." 45 C.F.R. § 1304.21(c)(1)(ii). In fact, the "Guidance" to § 1304.21(c)(1) states that "[a]gencies develop their own curriculum or select and adapt from among a variety of curriculum approaches or frameworks. . ."

The Bush Administration has proposed establishing a new system that will jeopardize these important performance standards by enabling cash-strapped states to take away Head Start's local autonomy and the funds needed to reach our neediest children. Bush's proposal would offer states "...the opportunity to coordinate preschool programs with Head Start programs."[1] This proposal provides states, most of which are facing severe budget shortfalls, with a loophole to use Head Start funds to help close their budget deficits. In fact, the National Conference of State Legislatures recently reported that states are expected to have a total of $68.5 billion in budget deficits in fiscal year 2004.[2]

Consequently, it is much less likely that the neediest children will be served. In fact a 1998 General Accounting Office study found that federal funds are eight times more likely than state funds to target disadvantaged children.[3]

Promote the Family

Since its inception, Head Start programs have had a very strong family component. Although most of the American public considers Head Start as a program exclusively for poor preschoolers, Head Start, in fact, has a broader impact as it educates illiterate parents, encourages parents to acquire skills that will help them succeed in the workplace, provides the services that enable parents to help themselves move from welfare to work, allows them to participate meaningfully in the decisions of the Head Start center, and has generated a high level of satisfaction with the program among Head Start families.

Because it provides an opportunity for parents to help themselves educationally, Head Start has had an impact on the education of Head Start parents. For example, the proportion of Head Start parents who earned a license, certificate, or degree increased by 9 percentage points between the beginning and end of their child's program year. Additionally, Head Start parents reported having an increased sense of control over their lives at the end of their participation in Head Start than they had at the beginning.[4]

Head Start provides the necessary services to enable parents to move from welfare to work because Head Start Performance Standard 1304.40(d)(1) requires that programs provide "...parent involvement and education activities that are responsive to the ongoing needs of the parents, both as individuals and as members of a group."[5] For instance, the Macon Program for Progress Head Start in North Carolina has, in addition to providing care to its children, helped families move from welfare to the workplace by providing adult education classes and other training programs.[6]

Meanwhile, Head Start Program Performance Standards strongly encourage parents to participate in their children's education. Performance Standard 1304.40(a)(1) reads, "Grantee and delegate agencies must engage in a process of collaborative partnership-building with parents to establish mutual trust and to identify family goals, strengths, and necessary services and other supports."

According to Head Start Performance Standard 1304.50(a)(1), Head Start parents must participate in the governance of Head Start centers. They actively participate in the Policy Council, Policy Committee, and Parent Committee.[7] Parental participation ensures local control over their children's education.

Furthermore, families are very satisfied with Head Start. The President's Management Council reported that the Head Start program received the highest customer satisfaction score of any government agency and even had a higher score than many major companies, including Mercedes-Benz and BMW.[8]

Meanwhile, Early Head Start promotes the family through its assistance to pregnant women. Early Head Start is a program that provides a comprehensive set of services to only about 60,000 children prenatal through age 3 and their families with the overall goal of increasing the school readiness of young children in low-income families. These programs provide a range of individualized services in the areas of education and early childhood development; medical, dental, and mental health; nutrition; parent involvement; and other services.

These services are explicitly provided in the Head Start Program Performance Standards. Performance Standard 1304.40(c)(1) provides that Early Head Start programs must help pregnant women gain "...access to comprehensive prenatal and postpartum care, through referrals, immediately after enrollment..."[9] Furthermore, these services must include, "Health promotion and treatment, including medical and dental examinations on a schedule deemed appropriate by

the attending health care providers as early in the pregnancy as possible..."[10] The Bush Administration's proposal puts these pro-family standards in jeopardy.

Emphasize Literacy

In some quarters, it is believed that Head Start does not currently promote literacy. This is false as Head Start Performance Standard 1304.40(e)(4) *requires* Head Start programs to provide "...opportunities for children and families to participate in family literacy services."[11]

In the past, Head Start may not have emphasized literacy as much as its other components, such as health and social emotional development, because prior to the 1998 Head Start Reauthorization requirements, Head Start programs followed federal requirements and the recommendations of early childhood experts who placed a stronger emphasis on these other components that affect learning.[12]

Since the reauthorization of Head Start in 1998, Head Start programs have placed a stronger emphasis on literacy. Head Start children demonstrated a greater increase in vocabulary and early writing than the typical child during the 2000-2001 program year.[13] Moreover, 83 percent of Head Start graduates were able to identify most or all letters of the alphabet.[14]

Yield Return-on-Investment

American taxpayers are much more likely to receive a higher return on their investment in Head Start by keeping it in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and by preventing it from being block granted to the states than if the states were to gain control over Head Start. The higher economic payoff comes from how Head Start is currently administered and the states' generally weak record of operating and evaluating the learning in preschool programs.

Currently, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services administers Head Start programs and has an effective and accountable infrastructure in place to ensure their high quality, but the U.S. Department of Education lacks that infrastructure. This means that the U.S. Department of Education would have to administer Head Start by block granting it to the states. Block granting this program to the states would mean that in addition to the funds that are already being spent efficiently and effectively at the federal and local levels, tax dollars would have to be spent at the state level making an extra and unnecessary layer of administrative bureaucracy. Block granting Head Start to the states would undermine Head Start's quality services. As an extensive evaluation of state preschool services found, states have generally offered a less comprehensive set of services than Head Start has. Head Start sets the standard for major governmentally-funded preschool programs in the U.S.[15] Based on the track record of most states — and the states' severe fiscal problems — moving Head Start to state control would water down Head Start.

Although President Bush's proposal calls on states to maintain the current number of 3- and 4-year-olds in Head Start, it is very vague about the kind of services that the states would need to provide.[16] This proposal would enable states to reduce services in order to maintain current enrollment levels and to shift the dollars from this reduction in services to help pay their budget deficits. This harmful move would significantly reduce the economic benefit of Head Start to American taxpayers.

Maintaining and increasing the quality of Head Start is essential for it to provide the substantial return-on-investment that American taxpayers deserve because high quality preschool programs provide the highest return. A cost-benefit analysis of the federally-financed Chicago

Child-Parent Center, a program similar to Head Start, revealed that for every $1 spent by taxpayers, society received more than $7.[17] Furthermore, cost-benefit studies of high quality preschool programs have yielded large returns-on-investment. A recent cost-benefit analysis of the Abecedarian Early Childhood Intervention Project in Chapel Hill, North Carolina revealed that for every $1 spent by taxpayers they received $4 in future benefits, and a cost-benefit analysis of the Perry Preschool program in Ypsilanti, Michigan, found that for every $1 spent on preschool, society receives more than $7.[18]

Overall, Head Start programs, in comparison to most state-funded preschool programs, provide an extra layer of accountability to taxpayers because the learning of Head Start children are assessed more rigorously and thoroughly than the learning by children in most state-funded preschool programs. Head Start programs maximize their tax dollars by assessing their children's development on an ongoing basis in a variety of ways. The 1998 Head Start Act, as amended, requires that the Department of Health and Human Services collect national outcomes data on Head Start children. Every Head Start program is already required to assess leaning in all domains of development, and the Head Start Bureau already monitors every Head Start program regularly to ensure that these programs meet minimum quality standards.

Moreover, the Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) and the National Head Start Impact Study have been and will be providing assessment data. FACES is an ongoing national longitudinal study providing data on the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of Head Start children. Authorized by the Head Start Act, as amended, the National Head Start Impact Study in future years will be providing information on how Head Start affects the school readiness of Head Start children relative to those children not enrolled in Head Start and data showing under which conditions Head Start works best and for which children. The National Head Start Impact Study is the most scientific evaluation of Head Start programs in that it randomly selects the intervention and control groups for comparison.

In contrast, a recent study of state-funded preschools revealed that only 13 of these preschools between 1977 and 1998 had conducted formal evaluations of the effects of their programs on their children that they served. None of these evaluations, unlike the Head Start Impact Study, used a randomly assigned control group, a crucial feature of scientifically-based research.[19]

Reduce Crime

Because Head Start programs intervene in a significant way early in a child's life, research has found that children participating in Head Start and other quality early childhood programs are less likely to engage in criminal behavior. One study found African-Americans who participated in Head Start are significantly less likely to have been charged with a crime than their siblings who did not participate in Head Start.[20] Another piece of research revealed that at-risk children not afforded the opportunity to participate in a quality early childhood program are five times more likely to be arrested repeatedly by age 27.[21]

Encourage Volunteerism

Head Start's institutions and culture encourages volunteerism from Head Start parents and the larger local community. About 1.35 million people volunteered in Head Start programs during the 2001-2002 program year. While 871,219 of these people were current or former Head Start or Early Head Start parents or guardians, Head Start programs must assist in the recruitment of volunteers from throughout the local community.[22] These volunteers frequently come from

civic, business, and religious organizations. In fact, many Head Start centers are located in churches.

---

[1] U.S. Department of Human Services. (2003, February 3). President Bush's Plan to Prepare Children for Kindergarten. Accessed at http://dhhs.gov/news/press/2003pre/20030203.html on February 6, 2003.

[2] National Conference of State Legislatures. (2003, February 4). State Budget Gaps Growing at Alarming Rate According to New NCSL National Fiscal Report. Accessed at http://www.ncsl.org/programs/press /2003/pr030204.htm on February 11, 2003.

[3] U.S. General Accounting Office. (1998, January). School Finance: State and Federal Efforts to Target Poor Students. Washington, D.C., 11.

[4] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2001, January). *Head Start FACES: Longitudinal Findings on Program Performance*. Third Progress Report, iv.

[5] _____. (2001). Head Start Program Performance Standards and Other Regulations, 133.

[6] Finlay, B. and H. Blank. (1998, May). Head Start: Helping Families Move from Welfare to Work. Children's Defense Fund, 4.

[7] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2001). Head Start Program Performance Standards and Other Regulations, 159.

[8] _____. (1999, December 13). *HHS News*. Head Start Bests Mercedes and BMW in Customer Satisfaction. Accessed on January 3, 2003 at http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/press/1999/hssatisfies.htm.

[9] _____. (2001). Head Start Program Performance Standards and Other Regulations, 131.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., 136.

[12] This does not mean that prior to 1998 that Head Start teachers did not teach numbers and letters to children. In 1984, Head Start Performance Standard 1304.2-2(b)(2)(iii) provided that Head Start children should work "...toward the recognition of the symbols for letters and numbers according to the individual developmental level of the children." Moreover, the Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-227) provides that "...all children in America will start school ready to learn..."

[13] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES).

[14] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2001, January). *Head Start FACES: Longitudinal Findings on Program Performance*. Third Progress Report, iii.

[15] Ripple, C., W. Gilliam, N. Chanana, and E. Zigler (1999, May). Will Fifty Cooks Spoil the Broth? *American Psychologist*. 54, 5: 327-343.

[16] U.S. Department of Human Services. (2003, February 3). President Bush's Plan to Prepare Children for Kindergarten. Accessed at http://dhhs.gov/news/press/2003pre/20030203.html on February 6, 2003.

[17] Reynolds, A., J. Temple, D. Robertson, and E. Mann. (2001, June). Age 21 Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Title I Chicago Child-Parent Center Program, Executive Summary. Accessed at http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/cls/cbaexecum4.html on March 29, 2003.

[18] FPG Child Development Institute. (2002). High-Quality Child Care Returns Far More than Cost – New Report. Accessed on November 25, 2002 at http://www.fpg.unc.edu/highlight_Detail.cfm?ID=180; W. Steven Barnett. (1993, October). Benefit-Cost Analysis of Preschool Education: Findings from a 25-year Follow-Up. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*. 65, 4: 505-506; Schweinhart, L., H. Barnes, and D. Weikart. (1993). Significant Benefits, The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study through Age 27. Ypsilanti, Michigan: High/Scope® Press, xv.

[19] Gilliam, W. and E. Zigler. (2000). A Critical Meta-analysis of All Evaluations of State-Funded Preschool from 1977 to 1998: Implications for Policy, Service Delivery and Program Evaluation. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. 15, 4: 441-442 and 465. These state-funded preschools serve children aged three to five, are accessible to children from low-income families, provide classroom-based educational services, serve children with and without disabilities, are mostly state-administered, and are primarily state-funded.

[20] Garces, E., D. Thomas, and J. Currie. (2002, September). Longer-Term Effects of Head Start. *The American Economic Review*. 92, 4: 999-1012.

[21] Schweinhart, L. and D. Weikart, (1993, July 2). Success by Empowerment: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study through Age 27. Testimony before the Advisory Committee on Head Start Quality and Expansion, 3.

[22] National Level Summary Report. Head Start Program Information Report for 2001-2002 Program Year; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2001). Head Start Program Performance Standards and Other Regulations, 170.

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

X	This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.
	This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").

p203/173